

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----072041 101514Z /42
O 101234Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 993

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 4048

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, NPG
SUBJ: ALLIED ATTITUDES ON NEUTRON BOMB

REF: STATE 184569

1. GON HAS MADE NO OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON NEUTRON BOMB EXCEPT AS REPORTED THE HAGUE 3812 IN RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS WHEN IT SAID IT DID NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO REACH JUDGMENT, ADDING THAT DUTCH JUDGMENT WOULD ULTIMATELY DEPEND UPON ALLIANCE CONSULTATIONS AND WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NOT ONLY MILITARY/TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS BUT ALSO RISK OF NUCLEAR ESCALATION. DEPARTMENT WILL ALSO RECALL SOMEWHAT ADVERSE DUTCH REACTION TO GENERAL HAIG'S COMMENTS TO PRESS SUPPORTING DEPLOYMENT. AT THAT TIME OUR MFA CONTACT ALSO STRESSED POINT OF NEED FOR ALLIANCE CONSULTATIONS (THE HAGUE 3610).

2. FROM THIS WE WOULD EXPECT DUTCH ATTITUDE WOULD BE DETERMINED IN LIGHT OF REACTION OF OTHER NATO ALLIES, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING VALIDITY OF US POSITION AND THEIR ASSESSMENT OF ITS EFFECT ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS. WE WOULD EXPECT DUTCH TO
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GIVE CLOSE ATTENTION TO PROSPECTIVE ROLE OF NEUTRON WEAPONRY IN OVERALL NATO STRATEGY OF DETERRENCE. IF CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY SHOULD DEVELOP IN COURSE OF NATO DISCUSSIONS ABOUT MERITS OF DEPLOYMENT THE MORE LIKELY DUTCH RESERVE WOULD BUILD. THERE ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS THAT DUTCH WILL NOT BE EASY TO CONVINCE THAT NATO INTERESTS AND BROADER OBJECTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY WOULD BE SERVED BY US DECISION

TO PROCEED. BY SAME REASONING, ON OTHER HAND, THERE WOULD PRESUMABLY WELCOME HALT TO DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT WOULD ACCORD WITH STRONGLY AND WIDELY HELD DUTCH VIEWS ABOUT INHERENT RISKS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONRY.

3. MEDIA REPORTING AND PROSPECTIVE PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD ENHANCED RADIATION WEAPONS MUST BE CONSIDERED AGAINST BACKGROUND OF WIDESPREAD DUTCH MISGIVINGS ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN GENERAL, EXTENDING TO RESERVE ABOUT PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. THIS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE PREVAILS ESPECIALLY AMONG LEFT, INCLUDING LARGE SECTION OF LABOR PARTY AND LEFT WING OF CDA, WHICH TWO PARTIES WILL BE PARTNERS IN NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT NOW BEING FORMED. IT IS FACTOR WITH WHICH ANY DUTCH GOVERNMENT MUST RECKON. IN THIS CONNECTION RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT REVIEW THE HAGUE 6139 OF DECEMBER 24, 1974.

4. SO FAR MEDIA DISCUSSION OF NEUTRON BOMB HAS BEEN FACTUAL AND REASONED, BUT ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGATIVE. REPORTING AND ANALYSIS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED A VARIETY OF OBJECTIONS: LOWERING OF NUCLEAR THRESHOLD WITH GREATER RISK OF ESCALATION TO STRATEGIC EXCHANGE, DOUBTS ABOUT TACTICAL ADVANTAGES, HEAVY EMPHASIS ON ADVERSE MOREL CONSIDERATIONS, EFFECT ON ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS AND CONVERSELY LIKELIHOOD OF ACCELERATING THE ARMS RACE. EVEN IN CASES WHERE MEDIA COVER ADVANTAGES OF NEUTRON WEAPONS THEY END UP IN A WAIT-AND-SEE, NON-COMMITTAL MANNER,
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PRESUMABLY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT CONSIDER ALL THE FACTS ARE IN. WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING THAT WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT MEDIA REACTION WOULD NOT CONTINUE TO BE NEGATIVE ON PRESIDENTIAL DECISION TO DEVELOP NEUTRON WEAPONS AND EVEN MORE SO ON POSITIVE DECISION FOR THEIR DEPLOYMENT, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MORE DETAILS AND CONVINCING JUSTIFICATION MIGHT ALTER SOME REPORTING IN A POSITIVE SENSE.

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5. IN EVENT OF SUBSTANTIAL CONTROVERSY ABOUT NEUTRON WEAPONRY THERE COULD BE RISK OF REVIVING PAST DEBATE ABOUT GON'S OWN INVOLVEMENT WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THIS WOULD BE WORRISOME ELEMENT FOR DUTCH MILITARY WHOSE ATTITUDE ON NEUTRON WEAPONRY COULD OTHERWISE BE EXPECTED TO REMAIN POSITIVE.

6. ALTHOUGH REACTION OF MEDIA AND POLITICAL CIRCLES SO FAR HAS NOT BECOME A PROBLEM, IF A POSITIVE DECISION ON NEUTRON WEAPONS WERE ANNOUNCED IT IS ONLY PRUDENT TO ASSUME THE SITUATION WOULD CHANGE AND AN EMOTIONAL DEBATE SPURRED BY MEDIA AND EXTENDING INTO POLITICAL CIRCLES COULD BUILD UP RAPIDLY. (WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN INFORMED OF PLANNED DEMONSTRATION AT EMBASSY AUGUST 12-13 AGAINST DEVELOPMENT OF NEUTRON BOMB.) ALTHOUGH WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT DUTCH GOVERNMENT WOULD POINT OUT NEED TO AWAIT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS, PARTICULARLY OUTCOME OF DISCUSSIONS IN NATO, MEDIA WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO GO ALONG WITH ANY MORATORIUM ON DISCUSSION, AND CHARACTER OF THEIR REPORTING AND ITS EFFECT ON PUBLIC OPINION COULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR GON TO MAINTAIN DISCUSSION ON LEVEL PERMITTING REASONED DECISIONS. EVEN ASSUMING POSITIVE OUTCOME OF NATO DISCUSSIONS GON COULD COME UNDER CONSIDERABLE DOMESTIC PRESSURE TO DISSOCIATE ITSELF FROM PROGRAM, AND THERE IS AT LEAST A QUESTION WHAT OUTCOME WOULD BE, GIVEN ELEMENTS
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OF FRAGILITY IN ANTICIPATED NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, AFTER MUCH SOUL SEARCHING DUTCH COMMITMENT TO NATO MIGHT CARRY THE DAY.
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